

OFF-FORM WYCOMBE CONCEDE POINTS

BY 'NOVA'

Wycombe 2, Oxford 4

HOW lucky that no Whitley Bay scout took the trouble to watch Wycombe Wanderers at Loakes Park on Saturday. Had one been present he undoubtedly would have gone home confident of his team's chance of victory.

Fortunately, no "spy" was present to watch Wycombe give one of their most inept performances of the season, to hand two Isthmian League points to Oxford, who gained ample revenge for their own first home defeat of the season inflicted by Wycombe only four weeks ago.

But Wycombe did not take it easy because of their impending Amateur Cup tie. On the contrary they played it hard and fast — but unfortunately these were about the only two talents they showed throughout. They were beaten by the better side on the day.

The visitors were made to look twice as dangerous by the careless Wanderers defenders, who presented Oxford with all four goals. With Peter Roystone guarding the middle, things might have been different — although Alistair Lewis, deputising again, did not have a bad game.

ERRATIC PASSING

Neither Gale nor Maharg, who could blame an ankle injury, could gain any control in mid-field for their tackling, while often fierce and hard, was badly mistimed and their passing was

erratic. With so much room in which to work, the Oxford inside men, Bradbury and Woodley, were able to spray passes to both wings, especially to the right, where the diminutive Bernard Harris beat Pullin at will.

Only skipper John Beck, goalkeeper Dennis Syrett and, to a lesser extent, Lewis, came out of the game with any credit. But they could not be expected to cover up all the inadequacies of their colleagues.

The forwards suffered from the scant and inaccurate service — and none more than Paul Hodges, the one man who looked capable of winning the game for Wycombe.

PENALTY SHOCK

One could sense what kind of afternoon it was going to be for Wycombe when, after ten minutes, the referee ruled that Maharg had handled the ball in the penalty area, and Bob Jackson scored confidently from the spot.

The rest of the first half was a tale of woe. The only bright spots came from a couple of bursts from Hodges and a brilliant snaking run from Goodison which deserved a goal. Somehow he managed to shoot wide after beating five defenders and the goalkeeper!

But after the interval it was a different Wycombe — at least for a while. Within 90 seconds Samuels equalised with a surprise left-foot angled drive. But the revival was halted when the home defenders gave Morton a chance, which he gratefully accepted.

THE WINNERS

The effervescent John Beck was stung into action by this. A burst up the right wing ended with Balson flicking on a header to Lowen, who prodded it over the line. For the next ten minutes the Wanderers showed some of their recent form and Horseman, with a rasping shot which crashed against the bar, and then Samuels with a header, had Oxford worried.

But it was only momentarily. The powerful Buswell and Rundle regained control down the middle and Goodison started probing for the gaps again in the Wanderers' defence.

Four minutes from time he found one, but his long pass did not reach Woodley. Instead it cannoned off the luckless Pullin and past Syrett. Then almost on time, with all the fight knocked out of them, the Wanderers' defenders made their last blunder and Woodley was on hand to hammer the ball into the net.

Wycombe.—D. Syrett; J. Beck, G. Pullin; G. Maharg, A. Lewis, C. Gale; K. Samuels, T. Horseman, P. Lowen, J. Balson, P. Hodges.

Oxford.—J. Maskell; R. Jackson, K. Rumble; R. Goodison, I. Rundle, D. Buswell; B. Harris, J. Woodley, S. Morton, T. Bradbury, T. Gardiner.